

Advent #2

Anger

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Advent is during December, fallow month. This year we are lighting our advent wreath with four BLACK candles (representing the emotions of loneliness, anger, fear, and shame) and one WHITE candle (Jesus). We are reading from the book of Matthew: last week, we talked about Joseph's ALONENESS as he took on the responsibility to be the parental guardian of Jesus.

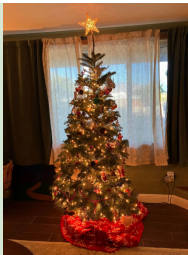
Christmas Music



Over Thanksgiving, our extended Crawford family had a bonfire where we sang a bunch of songs, including Christmas music. I love listening to 94.9 starting on Black Friday which plays only Christmas music now. I love all the songs about snow and the hymns. However, the 12 Days of Christmas can be confusing: what are these exactly?

Advent

Fasting and Preparation
Alone, Angry, Afraid, Ashamed
The light of Christ
banishes the darkness

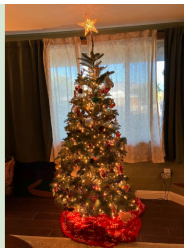


The key is that these are the 12 days FOLLOWING Christmas from Dec. 25 through Jan. 5, the eve of the Epiphany, Jan. 6 (AKA the Three Kings Day). Typically, we don't really celebrate the days after Christmas: Advent is about fasting and preparation for the celebration. However, Advent preparation is really for a SEASON of celebration following the coming of Jesus.

We are talking about how the light, joy, and love of Christ banishes the darkness filled with loneliness, anger, fear, and shame

Advent Anger

Self Defense
Broken World
Psalms 4:4 "In your anger
do not sin; when you are
on your beds, search your
hearts and be silent."



First, our anger (a secondary emotion) is in **self-defense** as a shield that protects us from what we are really feeling (hurt, fear, sadness, disappointment, frustration, guilt, shame, etc.)

Second, we are angry that we live in a **broken world**: there is a lot to be angry at in the world! The key for managing this normal

emotion is “in your anger, don’t sin” (Ps. 4:4). However, we usually don’t stop at just being angry: we harbor contempt and bitterness and kill and destroy and sin.

Matthew 2

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, **2** saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

I believe the Magi came from the East and were descendents of Daniel (but don't quote me on this!) These people came to worship the “King of the Jews.”

3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; **4** and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. **5** They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

6 “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.””

7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. **8** And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” **9** After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.

Why is Herod so angry? Years before this, there was a group of people near Judea who weren’t Jewish who either had to leave their land or become Jewish. This was Herod’s heritage. One of the men was given governorship of this area until he was poisoned and died. His sons Herod and his brother succeeded him. They ruled for a short time using the power given to them by the Romans (but they weren’t kings) and there was an uprising. Herod’s brother committed suicide and Herod left for Rome. Later, he goes back to Jerusalem where he quells the uprising and becomes a legitimate king. He married a Hasmonean (royal) princess and finished the 2nd temple, investing a lot of money in public works. He built forts and temples to the imperial cult where people could worship the emperor.

Matthew 2:1-12,16-18

The Magi
“King” Herod
Best Baby Shower Gift
Herod’s Anger



He was loyal to the Roman emperor and a king though he wasn’t Jewish or a king. So imagine how he felt when people came from far away to worship the “king of the Jews.”

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. **11** And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Best Baby Gift ever: Gold, Frank, Myrrh.

12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. **17** Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

18 “A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

This is the anger into which the light of Christ is born.



Herod is furious at having been tricked and outwitted, so much that he commits this atrocity which is heavy and hard to deal with. This is the anger that the light of Christ is born. Herod is angry and furious and responds out of his fury, committing great sin. But this is not just Herod's anger: imagine the weeping and mourning in Bethlehem. Two thousand years later, we are angry with him as well. But it's not just this anger: we can trace anger throughout the Old Testament, back to the beginning to Cain and Abel, Joseph's

brothers selling him into slavery, Moses breaking the tablets and then hitting the rock (for water) in anger, Saul's anger at David because people liked him more, David's anger at Nabel and at God, Elijah retreats to the mountain and is angry, Elisha is angry at people for calling him names. Clearly there is great anger! God is angry! This is hard to wrestle with in the OT: God is angry repeatedly with his people. Micah talks about the sacrifice of children.

But it's our anger, too: the disease, the wars, the abuse and poverty, exploitation of children and women. We are angry at other drivers: I have reflected on my own anger this past year and I am overwhelmed.

Where is Jesus?

Broken World
Mark 3
John 2
Self Defense
Luke 4
Luke 23



Where is Jesus in all this anger? If this anger has been banished by the Light of the World, where is Jesus? We must look for him!

First, we see Jesus's anger in **Mark 3** when he teaches in the synagogue with its twisted rules regarding the Sabbath. A man with a shriveled hand needs healing but this was considered work on the Sabbath. Jesus asks them what is lawful on the Sabbath: is it better to do good or do evil? Save a life or to kill? These are not hard questions! On the Lord's Day, which reflects the character of God, the people remained silent, caught up more in their systems than on God. Jesus looked at them in anger and then healed the man's hand. Jesus has compassion in his anger and moves this way.

In **John 2**, Jesus goes to Jerusalem and finds people selling and exchanging money in the temple courts. He made a whip out of cords and scattered the coins. Background: people had to buy things when they came to the temple and they had to exchange their money for Roman money and then buy the right things for their sacrifices. It's super complicated and difficult to worship God to do all these steps and be taken advantage of by person after person. Jesus is angry and says his Father's house was turned into a den of robbers. Jesus acts with compassion to care for those who are coming to make sacrifices so they can be in relationship with a loving God.

Self-Defense: We all have moments in our life that make us angry: we tell others so they can be angry with us and validate our anger. There are moments in Jesus's story where if you told it to me that I would agree with you and validate your anger.

In **Luke 4**, Jesus was teaching in his home town yet the people were furious at what he had to say. They tried to throw him off the cliff but he walked through the crowd and went on his way.

In **Luke 23**, Jesus was crucified between 2 criminals; he says to forgive the ones crucifying him because they didn't know what they were doing.

Following the Light

Discernment
Dependance
Devotion



I want to invite us today to consider our anger in the context of following the LIGHT, out of our anger into the LIGHT. This looks like following him with these three ways that Eric talked about last week.

Following the Light

Acknowledge

Lay it down

Engage Compassion



Practically, this looks like **acknowledging** our anger. Some of us don't even know we are angry: some of us don't struggle with it but even so, there are things we should be angry with.

Acknowledging means confessing the ways we have sinned in our anger: Noticing what is there behind the shield. What is my shield of anger protecting? Walk through what happened and try to find what is behind the shield. This is probably the easiest step.

Next, we need to **lay down the shield** and exchange it for FAITH. To be angry is tiring and burdensome. Instead, we need to pick up a shield of faith and lay down the anger. This might be the hardest step.

Finally, **devotion** in this is to *engage compassion*: to devote myself to Jesus to gain compassion for the world around me.

This is can be the **work of a moment** and the **work of a lifetime**:

For example: Last Friday, as I was writing this sermon, I was trying to acknowledge my anger, laying it down, and engaging in compassion. At the same time, my kids were playing outside and Layne asked to check on them. I then see my son coming into the house with a hose in his hands. As I told him "NO", he sprayed not only the dining room but me. I was angry. As I thought about acknowledging my anger, laying it down, and engaging compassion, I could see how using the hose would be very enticing for a 3 yo and I took my son and engaged him.

Anger could also be a lifetime: Last January, I had to confess my deep anger things and people in my past and I spent the year thinking about what was behind the anger. The hardest anger for me is when I feel misunderstood and when others tell me that what I was angry about didn't really happen like I remember. I had to go over the parts of my childhood when I was bullied. I explored the anger I felt then and the anger I feel now: the sadness and the deep wounds. Jesus invites me to take my shield of anger and lay it down and depend on him and trust him and pick up a shield of faith which is compassion. I have tried to have compassion on my teachers and peers in elementary schools.

Anger is a moment and a lifetime: We enter Advent and walk into the light with our anger, lay it down, and engage with compassion in the world.